

In reviewing the divisional administration report the Collector has recorded that "the system of internal fire-paths has been a success; for though there were more fires this year than last, the area burnt was not half so much, showing that the fires did not spread as they did last year, and it is the spreading of a fire that the paths are intended to prevent."

73. Fires occurred in all the ranges of the Násik Division, but there has been a great improvement in the vigilance and activity of the forest subordinates, and also of forest villagers, in discovering and attacking them.

74. In the Ahmednagar Division 78 fires were started against 29 of the previous year; and they overran 2,898 acres, or about eight times more space than during the previous year. The damage done to forest property by these fires was estimated at Rs. 169; and in connection with this the Collector of Ahmednagar has recorded: "The Collector had occasion to remark when forwarding certain returns of forest fires that the loss of produce assigned to this cause was out of all proportion small when compared with the estimates of damage done to the same class of produce by trespassing cattle. The object of the forest subordinates in depreciating the former kind of loss, was of course obvious, and the Collector was glad to find that the Conservator caused the correction of this disingenuousness."

75. Fire conservancy in the Poona Division has not been so satisfactory as could be desired, the area traversed having been 2,495 acres greater than that of the previous year. The fires have chiefly taken place in the ghát talukas; and in the majority of cases have been due to carelessness and negligence in ráb-burning, the villagers taking no reasonable precautions to prevent fire spreading from their fields to the adjoining forests. Several cases in which carelessness and negligence in ráb-burning were traced to the offenders, were sent up for trial, but the Magistrates refused to convict, on the ground that no rules have been passed under Section 25 (b) of the Forest Act as amended. * - *

The most important case of firing the forest occurred in the Khed Range, where one Bálárám Bhaurám, an agent of the Commissariat hay contractor, was apprehended in the act of firing the grass in the Kohinde Budruk reserved forest, on or about the 8th of May 1893, in order to conceal malpractices in connection with the exploitation of grass, and he was sent up for trial before the 2nd Class Magistrate of Khed, who convicted and sentenced the accused to six months' rigorous imprisonment, and a fine of Rs. 100. On appeal, however, to the Sub-divisional Magistrate, the case was committed to the Sessions, where, unfortunately, the accused was acquitted.

76. In the Sátára Division an area of a little more than 3 square miles was burnt by 97 fires, of which the Jávli Range had 20, Mahábaleshvar 16, Pátan 15, Shirála 6 and Wái 5; thus 62 fires broke out in the ghát ranges and the remainder in the eastern ranges. The forest subordinates were very watchful and active; for in 41 out of the 97 fires the incendiary was caught: of these 9 were let off with a warning, as boys were the culprits: in the other 32 cases prosecutions were ordered, and at the end of the season 13 convictions and only 1 acquittal had been recorded. 18 cases remained awaiting trial.

77. A little more than a square mile was burnt in the Sholápur Division; and the cause of the fires is attributed to careless smoking by persons passing through reserved forests, or to sparks from passing railway engines.

78.—The entire area in charge of the Forest Department, whether it be legally constituted reserved forest, or—protected forest, or provisionally notified forest lands, is brought under fire-protection directly it is placed in the care of the forest subordinates.

(3). *Regulation of Grazing and Protection from Cattle.*

79. Grazing is regulated under the rules passed by Government in their Resolution No. 3595 of 23rd May 1890; and for this purpose portions of forest areas are kept open during a part of the year, and are available to all local cattle, including agricultural cattle and other privileged cattle which are permitted to graze in such portions, some free of charge, some on payment of fees on the permit system. Cattle from outside the district also are admitted to graze on higher rates of fees if the forests can support them. In addition thereto, some "valuable kurans," fodder reserves, the tree growth in which has attained a

sufficient height to be beyond the risk of damage by cattle, are also sold by auction for grazing, for a defined period generally, after the grass crop has been cut by hand and removed.

From the 16th August of one year to the 31st March of the next is generally considered to be the grazing season; and from the 1st April to the 15th August, the close season against grazing, in respect of grazing areas in the forests of the Deccan, with the exception of the Khándesh Divisions, where the close period extends from 1st February to 31st May. Sheep and goats are not allowed to graze over a greater portion of the area open to grazing: and goats are only allowed where sheep are permitted, and then in the proportion of 1 goat to every 50 sheep.

80. The following statement shows the distribution of the areas between closed and open to grazing in the several divisions of the Central Circle, in round numbers :—

No.	Division.			Area open to grazing.	Area closed to grazing.	Total.	REMARKS.
				Sq. m.	Sq. m.	Sq. m.	
1	East Khándesh	...	...	736	60	796	
2	West Khándesh	...	...	916	365	1,281	
3	Násik	...	...	811	468	1,279	
4	Ahmednagar	...	...	477	369	846	
5	Poona	...	...	344	397	741	
6	Sátára	...	...	512	181	693	
7	Sholápur	...	...	96	182	278	
	Total			3,892	2,022	5,914	

81. The following statement shows the number of cattle of different kinds impounded in the several divisions of the Central Circle during the year, under Section 69 of the Indian Forest Act, for trespassing in closed forest reservations and those impounded for grazing in open areas without passes :—

No.	Division.	Kind of area.	Cows and Bullocks.	Buffaloes.	Camels.	Horses.	Asses.	Sheep.	Goats.	TOTAL FROM,	
										Closed area.	Open area.
1	East Khándesh	Closed ...	6,777	1,424	...	35	...	313	704	9,263	...
		Open ...	3,672	1,024	...	85	14	87	3,313	...	8,195
2	West Khándesh	Closed ...	9,331	1,562	...	71	...	2,384	2,404	15,502	...
		Open ...	4,795	788	...	47	2	36	933	...	6,506
3	Násik	Closed ...	15,853	1,112	...	181	24	19,274	5,560	41,097	...
		Open ...	5,813	317	...	68	16	19,739	4,842	...	21,825
4	Ahmednagar	Closed ...	33,224	2,695	3	372	59	18,865	14,357	74,575	...
		Open ...	15,461	1,163	...	82	100	19,572	14,701	...	51,079
5	Poona	Closed ...	14,502	1,563	4	192	63	12,643	7,593	36,565	...
		Open ...	6,453	1,022	...	103	22	9,170	7,813	...	24,653
6	Sátára	Closed ...	13,769	1,429	...	122	44	12,538	2,877	30,719	...
		Open ...	4,996	534	...	20	13	9,032	2,626	...	17,276
7	Sholápur	Closed ...	22,154	1,671	...	95	25	4,487	2,771	31,203	...
		Open ...	7,120	656	...	44	49	3,019	1,974	...	11,863
	Total	Closed ...	120,600	11,455	7	1,071	220	70,529	36,256	210,123	...
		Open ...	43,815	5,534	...	419	221	51,655	36,137	...	142,331

82. The East Khándesh Division records a decrease of 54 per cent, in the number of impoundings during the period of 12 months corresponding to the year 1891-92, while extensive seizures of cattle illicitly grazing in 'closed forest,' as well as 'open forest,' were made, and were severely dealt with under Section 67 of the Forest Act; the result being that the people have learnt to refrain from trespassing their cattle in closed forests, and to take out grazing permits for open forests. The nomadic graziers,—Thelaris who used to sweep over the Khándesh district with their large herds, driving their animals into all and any forest areas, without waiting to take permits and obtain a right of entry, and with an utter disregard of rules and regulations, and of the differentiation of closed and open forest,—have

learnt the wisdom of paying their fees beforehand, and taking out the necessary permits, whereby they secure grazing for their animals throughout the grazing season, instead of paying in pound fees and other penalties, in a single day, more than the season's permit fee for a brief spell of stolen grazing. The Collector has remarked: "In this division, as in the other, it is pleasant to find a large reduction in the number of cattle impounded, showing, as it probably does, that the people are getting to observe the rules better."

83. In West Khándesh also there is a steady annual decrease in impoundings: in 1890-91 the number was 45,821; in 1891-92 it fell to 24,500; and in the first twelve months of 1892-93 to 19,220; while between the 1st April and the 30th June 1893 only 3,088 head of cattle had to be sent to the pound.

84. About two-thirds of the total number of cattle impounded in the Násik Division were sheep and goats, the property of foreign graziers: these people establish themselves in foreign territory just beyond the frontier and drive their animals across into reserved forests to graze during the night, and they post scouts to signal the approach of forest guards or forest villagers, when their animals are driven out at once. In one case upwards of 2,500 sheep and goats were caught by forest subordinates and forest villagers grazing in a closed forest, in one night, and were sent to pound: their owners had been warned, frequently, but they maintained stoutly that their animals had not grazed in the reserved forest and did not want to graze there, even when the hoof-beaten track of the sheep and goats leading from their halting place into the forest was pointed out to them, and they were told that the animals had been seen from a distance within the forests: by means of their scouts they managed to evade apprehension, until one night forest guards and British villagers made a long detour through foreign territory, and took the graziers in the rear, catching the whole herd inside the forest, when they were marched off to the village pound. In this way one catch, in one place, in one night, sends up the tale of total impoundings of the year.

85. In the fifteen months of the forest year 1892-93 there has been an increase in the number of impoundings over the record of 1891-92 by 30,581, of which 8,019 were goats and 9,417 were sheep, in the Ahmednagar Division. Nearly 50 per cent. of the animals impounded during the forest year were sheep and goats.

86. In the same way in the Poona Division there has been an increase in the number of impoundings, which has gone up to 61,153, of which more than one-half or 37,219 were sheep and goats. The Divisional Forest Officer had occasion to bring, specially, to the notice of the Collector the goat nuisance, in the Dhond Range, with a view to the pound fees for these animals being raised.

87. In the Sátára Division the number of cattle impounded during the fifteen months totalled 47,794, of which 58 per cent. were sheep and goats.

88. 43,065 head of cattle were impounded during the forest year in the Sholápur Division, of which 31,203 were taken from closed forests: the number of sheep and goats came to 11,251. In 872 cases warnings were given to the owners of cattle for allowing their animals to trespass within forests.

89. As the year under report embraces a period of fifteen months, there appears to be an increase of 49,819 cattle over the figures of the preceding year, but on comparing the figures of the first twelve months, which gives an equal period of time, it will be found that there has been a decrease in the number of cattle impounded by 11,287 on the record of 1891-92. Of the total number impounded, more than half consisted of sheep and goats—122,184 of the former and 72,413 of the latter.

90. In order to keep out cattle from forests under reboisement, such as exploited coupes, plantations, &c., fences of the crown branches of the felled trees, are constructed, and wire-fencing is also erected in specially selected localities, the wire being purchased from either the Telegraph Department or in the local market.

91. The following sums have been spent in the purchase of wire during the year for use in the ensuing year;—

No.	Division.				Quantity of wire.	Amount.
						Rs.
1	East Khándesh...	...	...	...	{ 60 cwts. and 6,000 staples. }	1,210
2	West Khándesh	...	...	...	.....	...
3	Násik	...	...	...	{ 79 cwts. and 10,000 staples. }	1,533
4	Almednagar	...	...	...	55 cwts.	950
5	Poona	...	...	...	.....	...
6	Sátára	...	...	...	...	...
7	Sholápur	...	...	...	187 cwts.	3,028
	Total				{ 381 cwts. 16,000 staples. }	6,721

The fences previously made were also kept in good order and have proved, it is needless to say, very advantageous.

(c). IMPROVEMENT OF FOREST GROWTH.

(1). *Natural Reproduction.*

92. The year under report was favourable to natural reproduction, owing to a plentiful and seasonable rainfall generally throughout the Central Circle. In the East Khándesh Division it was very refreshing to observe the myriads of young plants of teak and of other kinds of timber trees resulting from self-sown seeds which appeared in suitable soil, on the bank of the Aner river, and in fire-protected areas, in the Sátputa and other forests. The Anjan (*Hardwickia binata*), which does not seed annually or regularly, seeded during the year, and has given an abundant supply of young life in the Transpurna, the Ráver, Sánda, Yával and other reserved forests where this valuable tree predominates. The stools of teak trees which were felled in the forests of the Jámner Range and in the Sátputás have thrown up vigorous shoots with scarcely any failures.

93. In the West Khándesh Division natural reproduction, which is generally much retarded by the fierce and extensive forest fires, which occur annually, has made a better show than usual, owing to the great reduction in the area of forest fires and also owing to more favourable atmospheric conditions.

94. Where fire-protection and closure against cattle have been effective, natural reproduction in the Násik forests is more conspicuous than elsewhere; however, its advance, except in parts greatly exposed to cattle, is generally satisfactory.

95. Mr. Wilkins, Divisional Forest Officer, Poona, reports that natural reproduction is making sure and steady progress all over his forests. Under the shelter of bushes, young plants of all kinds are to be seen, which have come from seeds deposited by birds and four-footed animals. The young fresh growth of nimb (*Melia azadirachta*) and of sandalwood (*Santalum album*) also, in places where the seedlings receive protection against cattle, and where they obtain moisture and nourishment and shade, is most marked in the drier and stonier high lands in the eastern ranges of the division; while in the western ranges, and more particularly along the Gháts, the new growth in the moist forests is very promising.

96. In the Sátára Division there is nothing special to record: the forests which do not suffer from cattle are making steady improvement in every way. In order to supplement the work of Nature in scattering seeds, the forest guards of the permanent establishment collected 164 khandis, 26 maunds, 23 pounds of seeds of trees specially valued for timber and fuel, and broad-casted them, during the rains, over 23,022 acres of closed forests.